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Kennedy's Braintrust

More Professors Enlist

But They Play Limited

Policy-Making Role

They Supply Technical Data,
Help Overcome Distrust
Of Senator by "Liberals"

Aid From Zbigniew Brzezinski

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WASHINGTON — The talk at John F. Kennedy's Hyannis Port, Mass., summer home changed yesterday from precincts and politicians to interest rates and economic growth. The occasion was a visit to the Democratic Presidential nominee by four academic economists—the first public unveiling of part of Sen. Kennedy's braintrust.

The four professors—Paul Samuelson of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, John Kenneth Galbraith and Seymour Harris of Harvard and Richard Lester of Princeton—comprise an all-star team of "liberal" economic thought. This quartet is among a chorus of professorial voices being heard in the background as the Kennedy campaign gets moving.

While the group scarcely constitutes a shadow cabinet or an advisory council exerting decisive influence on the Senator's policies, it is feeding him vital information, technical data and interpretation on issues from defense and foreign policy to economic growth and farm problems. The net effect certainly lies somewhere on the "liberal" side, though the braintrusts vary widely in their ideology. While candidate Kennedy makes his own decisions, he shows sincere respect for the professors' opinions.

Harvard to California

No politician in American history—not even Franklin D. Roosevelt—can match Sen. Kennedy in the sheer size of his braintrust. For campaign purposes, the professors will help prepare "position papers" on 120 separate subjects. The number of professors involved in this operation, directly or indirectly, could easily exceed 100. The universities represented range from Harvard to Rutgers to Michigan to California. The professors will work through Archibald Cox, a labor-law specialist who has taken leave from Harvard Law School to serve as captain of the braintrust as well as to lead a Washington-based research-writing team.

A reorganization of the braintrust formed in 1958, was begun immediately after Sen. Kennedy's nomination at Los Angeles last month. Recognizing that the group was dominated by Harvard and M. I. T. professors, the Senator placed Mr. Cox in charge of recruiting academicians from beyond the tight little world of Cambridge. Harvard law professor Abe Charles was placed in command in Cambridge to keep the words of wisdom flowing from the banks of the Charles.

Among the non-Cambridge braintrusters recruited so far are University of Minnesota farm economist Willard Cochrane; Carl Spaeth, Stanford University Law School dean and a specialist in foreign policy, and Robert Alexander, a Latin America specialist from Rutgers. A University of Michigan braintrust unit is being formed by Professor Wilbur Cohen, who is emerging as a top Kennedy adviser on Social Security matters. Similar units are being developed in California, both in Los Angeles and San Francisco Bay areas.

Yet the Kennedy braintrust may be broader than it is deep. It's hardly an accident that the intellectuals ushered into the Kennedy presence yesterday were the first such visitors amid three weeks of meetings with Democratic politicians. Few members of the braintrust will have direct campaign contact with Sen. Kennedy. Final preparation of the position papers for the candidate's approval will rest not with an academician but with Michael Feldman, 44-year-old Philadelphia lawyer who has served on the Senator's staff for three years.

"More Help Than Help"

"Frankly, I think the braintrust has provided more publicity than help," contends a paid member of the Kennedy staff. Complaining another: "The professors give us old clichés instead of new ideas." One of the braintrusters admits: "Not one of us calls the tune for Kennedy in any of the really important fields—defense, foreign policy, economics, the farm problem."

But Sen. Kennedy's brain-picking activities on the campus were never intended solely to help him form policy positions; an added purpose has been to overcome considerable distrust of him by "liberal" eggheads whose hearts belong to Adlai Stevenson. From that standpoint, he has succeeded. The wife of a Kennedy braintrustee puts it this way: "The best way to get an intellectual on your side is to ask his opinion."

One Kennedy enthusiast even went so far as to propose to Sen. Kennedy an "Operation Academic" which would have Thomas Beer, red-mustached Harvard professor of government and head of the "liberal" Americans for Democratic Action, appealing to hundreds of professors to send their views to Sen. Kennedy. The Senator rejected the plan as too blatant a device to win "liberal" support; anyway, Mr. Beer is one Harvardian who has not formally climbed aboard the Kennedy bandwagon.

But the Kennedy camp has made no protest about a spate of published stories blowing up the contributions of the braintrust all out of proportion. In fact, the Nixon side has gotten into the act of comparing captive eggheads. After the Kennedy stories appeared in print, a reporter friendly to Mr. Nixon listed a band of academicians advising the Republican nominee.

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